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**Review of: Jorgenson, Chad, The Embodied Soul in Plato's Later Thought
(Cambridge Classical Studies), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2018**

Ferber, Rafael

Abstract: This review tries to show that even if Plato ties the soul in the later dialogues more to the body, he still adheres in the "Timaeus" to the separation of the soul from the body as far as it is possible for humans, and in the "Laws" to the soul as a separated entity whose union with the body is in no way better than separation.

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JORGENSON, Chad, *The Embodied Soul in Plato's Later Thought* (Cambridge Classical Studies), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2018, x + 217 p.

This beautifully printed book is the result of a dissertation written under the supervision of Filipp Karfik, University of Fribourg, subsidized by a Swiss National Science Foundation project, "The Embodied Soul: The Constitution of the Ethical Subject in Plato's Later Thought" (01 November 2010-31 October 2013). It begins with the appropriate words, "The *Phaedo* casts a long shadow" (p. 1), and starts from the thesis that, whereas we have a separation between body and soul in the middle dialogues and especially in the *Phaedo*, "[...] in the late dialogues Plato ties the soul more closely to Becoming" (p. 197). This is a reading that stands in contrast to the reading of Plotinus: "Whereas Plotinus stays faithful to the line advanced in the *Phaedo* that our ultimate goal, as humans, consists in the absolute separation of the soul from the body, in Plato we find a general shift away from the metaphor of contamination and purification of the *Phaedo* (pp. 92-93)". The footnote indicates Plotinus, *Enn.*I.4 [16],

where Plato is mentioned on line 10, and *Enn.*VI.8.5, where it is rather hard to see a direct influence of Plato's *Phaedo*. (Perhaps it is a misprint for *Enn.*IV.8.5, 4: [...] *kai to en kakô(i) tô(i) somati einai*).

The book consists of seven loosely connected chapters that try to elucidate this thesis: "Thymos" (pp. 6-38), "Appetitive Soul" (pp. 39-59), "Rational Soul" (pp. 60-87), "Measuring Pleasure" (pp. 88-117), "Eudaimonia" (pp. 118-140), "The Political Sphere" (pp. 141-163), and "Eschatology" (pp. 164-190). These chapters present a "reconstruction, within my own historical and cultural horizons, of some of the principal currents of thought running through the later dialogues" (p. 5). This reconstruction contains mainly paraphrases of Platonic texts, with discussions of some of the relevant literature, as well as many valuable observations, for example, that the "the therapy of the appetitive soul must be undertaken under the oversight of medicine" (p. 116). The author has himself given a kind of summary in the conclusion (pp. 201-203), and Olivier Renaut has done something similar in his review in *Philosophie Antique* (2019, pp. 178-180), especially by mentioning four forms of mediation between the dualism of body and soul in the *Phaedo*: "le thymos, l'immortalité par degré, la politique, les sciences" (p. 179).

If I may be allowed to add three critical remarks: First, there is no summary of the *status questionis* of the confusing secondary literature on this topic, nor any formulation of the remaining open questions. Such a summary would have been a laborious task for the author of the dissertation, but helpful for the reader. Second, the book lacks any comparisons to other conceptions of the "embodied" or "buried" (cf. *Grg.* 493a; *Crat.* 400c) or "imprisoned soul" (cf. *Phd.* 62b), e.g., in Aristotle or Descartes/Brentano (cf., e.g., "Plato as Teacher of Socrates?" In: Tulli, Mauro, Erler, Michael, *Plato in Symposium: Selected Papers from the Tenth Symposium Platonicum*, Academia Verlag, St. Augustin 2016, pp. 443-448).

Third, the main thesis of the book that "in the late dialogues Plato ties the soul more closely to Becoming" (p. 197) seems to be on the one hand true, but on the other hand counterbalanced by the "climax" of the *Timaeus*. It is true that Plato ties the soul more to the body, for example, in the conception of a mixed life in the *Philebus* as the choiceworthy life for human beings (*Phlb.* 21d3). Here the author makes the following interesting remark: "In the rejection of the life of pure thought as not choiceworthy, it is difficult not to hear the echo of a question many readers of the *Phaedo* have no doubt asked themselves about the ideal life of philosophy portrayed there" (p. 124, note 22). Perhaps even Plato is asking himself the question

of whether Socrates' life devoted to philosophy is not a one-sided life when he mentions Socrates' dream: "Socrates, practice and cultivate the arts (*mousikên poei ka ergazou*)" (*Phd.* 60e6-7). But surely the Socrates of the *Philebus* deviates from the Socrates of the *Phaedo* when the former gives the "gold medal" to the orderly mixed life of pleasure and reason, but only the "silver medal" to reason, and the "bronze medal" to pleasure as far it is pure (cf. *Phlb.* 67a-c). In the *Timaeus*, living creatures including the heavenly bodies have their bodies "bound by the ties of soul (*desmois te empsychois sômata dethenta zôa*)" (*Ti.* 38c5), and the whole corporeal world is fashioned within the world soul. In general, one can say that the tripartite soul, for the first time explicitly formulated in the *Republic* (cf. 436a-443a), is an embodied soul. Nevertheless, in the climax of the *Timaeus*, the "*homoiôsis theô(i)*" in the sense of a *homoiôsis noô(i)* is resumed (cf. *Ti.* 90d4-9) and even declared as the "aim" (*telos*) (*Ti.* 90d5) of human beings, which when achieved would be "that most excellent life offered to humankind by the gods, both now and forevermore" (*Ti.* 90d5-7). In the *Laws*, we even read that "union (*koinonia*) of body and soul is no way better than separation (*dialysis*), speaking seriously" (*Lg.* 828d4-5) and further:

Now we must believe the legislator when he tells us that the soul is in all respects different to the body, and that even in life what makes each one of us to be what we are is only the soul; and that the body follows us about as a reflection (*indallomenon*) of each of us, and therefore, when we are dead, the bodies of the dead are quite rightly said to be our images (*eidôla*); for the true and immortal being of each one of us (*ton de onta hemôn hekaston ontôs*) which is called the soul goes on her way to other Gods (*allous theous*), before them to give an account – which is an inspiring hope to the good, but very terrible to the bad, as the laws of our fathers tell us (*Lg.* 959a4-b6. Transl. Jowett with modifications by R.F.).

The expression "other Gods" (*Lg.* 959b4) is found in the *Phaedo*, 63b7, as well as that the true self of Socrates is the soul (cf. *Phd.* 115c6-d6). Although the definition of man as "a soul" is explicitly mentioned only in the *Alcibiades Maior* (cf. 130c1-3), the remark "what makes each one of us to be what we are is only the soul" shows that the real human being is identified with the soul.

This means that even if Plato ties the soul in the later dialogues more to the body, he still adheres in the *Timaeus* to the separation of the soul from the body as far as it is possible for humans, and in the *Laws* to the soul as a separated entity whose union with the body is in no way better than separation. In this sense, the *Phaedo* has already

“cast a shadow” in the *Corpus Platonicum*, although the Athenian does not quote verbatim “the Socrates in the *Phaedo*” (Aristotle. *GC* B9.335b10-14; cf. *Pol.* B.1261a6). Plato’s concern with the relation between body and soul, as has been claimed by Arius Didymus, is perhaps rather “*polyphônos*, and not *polydoxos*, as some suppose” (Stobaeus 2.55.5-7, Ed. Wachsmuth).

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